F1.3 Faculty Credentials

Consistent with the Higher Learning Commission's policy statement, "Determining Qualified Faculty Through HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices, the ECU Faculty Credential Policy ensures that faculty are qualified for the courses they are teaching by establishing the minimum qualifications for hiring all full-time and adjunct instructors of record regardless of the location of the course offering or mode of delivery. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, East Central University gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The Higher Learning Commission requires all accredited institutions to keep on file, for all full-time and adjunct faculty members, documentation of academic preparation. This documentation includes official transcripts and, if appropriate for demonstrating competence through equivalent experience, official documentation of professional and work experience, technical and performance competency, records of publications, certifications, evidence of teaching effectiveness, and other qualifications that contribute to student learning outcomes.

F1.3.1 Standards for Determining Qualifications

During the initial review for hiring, the applicant is evaluated to determine which criteria listed below the applicant meets. For faculty who meet criterion number 1 or number 2 below, follow the standard hiring procedure. For faculty who may qualify by criterion number 3, follow the Tested Experience Hiring Procedure detailed in Section 1.3.3.

F1.3.1.1 For Teaching Undergraduate Courses

1. Master's or doctoral degree in the teaching discipline or subfield* from a regionally-accredited institution; or
2. Master's or doctoral degree in an area other than that which faculty member is being asked to teach plus 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline or subfield* from a regionally-accredited institution; or
3. Documented Tested Experience. While it is expected that faculty members have academic preparation in their fields, in rare cases, where it can be clearly demonstrated that, by virtue of accomplishments and professional experience, an individual lacking a doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline has the knowledge and skills usually associated with a person fully qualified on the basis of academic credentials, the individual may be considered for instructional assignments. See Section 1.3.2 for Documented Tested Experience Criteria.

F1.3.1.2 For Teaching Graduate Courses

1. Doctoral degree or terminal degree in the teaching discipline or subfield* from a regionally-accredited institution; or
2. Doctoral degree in an area other than that which s/he is being asked to teach plus 18 doctoral semester hours in the teaching discipline or subfield* from a regionally-accredited institution; or
3. Documented Tested Experience. While it is expected that faculty members have academic preparation in their fields, in rare cases, where it can be clearly demonstrated that, by virtue of accomplishments and professional experience, an individual lacking a doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline has the knowledge and skills usually associated with a person fully qualified on the basis of academic credentials, the individual may be considered for instructional assignments. See section 1.3.2 for Documented Tested Experience Criteria.
    - For subfields that are appropriate but not obvious, the Department Chair may need to submit the Faculty Credential Form.

F1.3.2 Tested Experience

Qualifications include a breadth and depth of experience outside of the classroom in real-world situations relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member would be teaching. Qualifications are specific to individual disciplines and programs and could include certifications or licensures, extensive professional experiences, honors and awards, and distinguished publications. To demonstrate Tested Experience, substantive documentation is required.

Substantive documentation to support alternative credentialing includes, but is not limited to:

1. Official transcripts
2. Certifications that are related to the teaching discipline
3. Professional licensure related to the teaching discipline.
4. Significant professional experiences that are relevant to student learning outcomes of approved courses. However, in accordance with HLC policy, teaching experience is not a substitute for professional experience in the field.
5. Honors and awards related to academic performance or professional achievements related to the teaching discipline.
6. Publications in the area of specialization. Service to a professional field related to the teaching discipline.
7. Presentations on topics related to the teaching discipline at professional and/or academic conferences, symposium, or colloquia.

F1.3.3 Tested Experience Hiring Procedure

F1.3.3.1 Documentation Phase

1. Department Chair determines that the prospective faculty member will be considered under the Tested Experience process.
2. Department Chair procures the curriculum vitae (CV) and essential documentation from the prospective faculty member that will support tested experience credentialing.

F1.3.3.2 Review Phase

1. Department Chair completes the initial review of the CV and substantive documentation (examples listed in section 1.3.2 provided by the prospective faculty and determines if the documentation provides support for tested experience credentialing for the discipline/program.
    - If the Department Chair deems the documentation non-substantive, the prospective faculty will be removed from consideration for the teaching position.
    - If the Department Chair deems the documentation to be substantive, the Chair will complete the Faculty Credential Form and submit the form and all documentation to the Dean of the college/school.
2. The college/school Dean completes a review of the prospective faculty documentation.
    - If the Dean determines that the documentation is non-substantive and the form and materials are returned to the Department Chair with the rationale for the decision.
    - If the Dean concurs with the Department Chair recommendation, the form and documentation is forwarded forwards the signed Faculty Credential Form and documentation on to the provost and vice President of academic affairs.

F1.3.3.3 Approval Phase

1. The provost and vice President for academic affairs reviews the Faculty Credential Form and the documentation and makes a final determination as to whether the prospective faculty meets the criteria for hire under the guidelines listed in section 1.3.2.
    - If the decision is to deny approval, the Provost/VPAA will send notification with rationale to the college/school Dean.
    - If the decision is to approve the Provost/VPAA signs the Faculty Credential Form and sends notification to the college/school Dean that the normal faculty hiring process can proceed.
2. The form and the associated documentation will be placed in the faculty member's personnel file verifying the faculty meets requirements articulated both in the institution's Faculty Credential Policy and the HLC Faculty Credential Policy.

F1.3.4 Changes in Qualifications

If a faculty member's teaching responsibilities change due to a change in program requirements or institutional reorganization, including the deletion of a program, the faculty member must still meet the qualifications listed in the institution's Faculty Credential Policy. If not met, the provost and vice President of academic affairs, college/school Dean, Department Chair and faculty member will agree on a course of action and timeline for the faculty to satisfy the criteria.